

CHOOSING A HISTORY DAY TOPIC

KEYS TO FINDING A GOOD TOPIC



It's history—It happened at least 15 years ago.

It's significant—It fits the 2020 National History Day theme, *Breaking Barriers in History*. Learn more about the annual theme at nhd.org.

It's got sources—It has plenty of primary and secondary sources available.

It demands interpretation—It was important when it happened and remains relevant.

It's got soul—You care about it!

Getting Started: One way to choose a topic is to start with a general subject area you find interesting. What historical figure, event, or geographic region are you interested in? What are your favorite hobbies, sports, music, dance, books, art? This also could be a topic you read about in a textbook or something related to local or family history. Think about historic eras you're interested in:

Ottoman Empire

The Renaissance

The Enlightenment

Industrial Revolution

American Civil War and Reconstruction Era

Gilded Age

Progressive Era

World War I

Great Depression

World War II

Korean War

Vietnam War

Cold War

Fur Trade

Topic Brainstorm: Using the space below, brainstorm one topic in each category that fits this year's theme, *Breaking Barriers in History*.

Politics

Topic Idea:

Environment

Topic Idea:

Civil Rights

Topic Idea:

Social Issues

Topic Idea:

Military History

Topic Idea:

Health and Medicine

Topic Idea:

Science & Technology

Topic Idea:

Education

Topic Idea:

Business

Topic Idea:

Arts, Music, Culture

Topic Idea:

Examples of Barriers:

- Berlin Wall
- Atlantic Ocean
- Barbed wire
- Antibiotics as barriers to pathogens
- State and national borders
- Political barriers (voting rights, civil rights)
- Attitudes as barriers (recognizing and changing attitudes to physical disabilities and mental health issues)
- “Firsts”—the first person to... (fill in the blank)

Explore the *Breaking Barriers* Theme:

- Is the barrier human-made or natural?
- Is the barrier physical or ideological?
- Was the barrier truly broken, or did it remain intact in some form, needing to be broken again years later?
- Why was breaking the barrier important, and what were the consequences? What were the short and long-term impacts?
- Are all barriers negative, or can they be positive sometimes too?
- How and why might a barrier be created?

Selecting a Topic:

1. Who/what do you want to study? Why are you interested in studying this person/event/idea?

2. Describe why this person/event/idea is important—explain the historical significance. Give three clear reasons why this was important to history at a local, state, national, or international level:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. How do you think this person/event/idea connects to the National History Day annual theme?

4. Do you have enough time and access to available primary and secondary sources to complete the project?

NORTH DAKOTA TOPIC IDEAS

Native Americans

Treaties
Dakota/Lakota
Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara
Menoken Indian Village
Double Ditch Indian Village
Knife River Indian Villages
Chippewa, Métis
Louis Riel and the Red River Rebellion
Sitting Bull
Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 and Assimilation
Reservations
Boarding Schools
Indian Citizen Act of 1924
Indian Reorganization Act, 1934
American Indian Movement
Whitestone Hill

Westward Expansion

Louisiana Purchase
Thomas Jefferson
Lewis and Clark
Fort Mandan
Fur Trade
Gingras Trading Post
Fort Clark
George Catlin (artist)
Fort Union
Fort Laramie Treaty of 1898

Military Expeditions on the Northern Plains

Civil War Battles in North Dakota (5 historic sites)
Sibley, Sully, and the Dakota War
Killdeer Mountain Battlefield
Fort Abraham Lincoln
George Custer
Battle of the Little Bighorn
Fort Abercrombie
Fort Buford
Fort Totten

Immigration and Settlement

Alexander Henry Jr.
Pembina
Homestead Act
Germans from Russia and other ethnic groups
African Americans (Era Bell Thompson, Ishram
Evans, William T. Montgomery, baseball)
Jewish settlers (Rachel Calof and others)
Muslims (mosque in Ross, N.D., 1929)
Agriculture: Farming and Ranching
Welk Homestead

Chateau de Morès
State Mill and Elevator
Bank of North Dakota

Transportation

Red River Carts
Steamboats
Railroads
James J. Hill
Great Northern Railway
Northern Pacific Railroad
Automobiles and Modern Highways
Airplanes

Politics

Nonpartisan League (NPL)
Women's Suffrage Movement
Linda Slaughter
Former Governors' Mansion
Historic 1883 Stutsman County Courthouse

The Modern Era

Spanish American War
Philippine American War
Spanish Flu of 1918
Prohibition
Great Depression and the Dirty Thirties
New Deal, Works Progress Administration (WPA)
Homefront during periods of war
Interment of Japanese and German Americans and
POWs in North Dakota (Fort Lincoln)
Herman Stern
Rural electrification
Television and radio in North Dakota
Pick-Sloan Project, Garrison Diversion
Cold War, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM)
Ronald Reagan Minuteman Missile Site
Discovery of oil and natural gas reserves
Governor Art Link and Reclamation Laws
National Guard in North Dakota
Zip to Zap
Judge Ronald Davies
Posse Comitatus and Gordon Kahl

Other Ideas

North Dakota Inventors
Corporations, manufacturing
Sports figures and teams
Authors, actors, musicians
Rough Rider Award recipients
Search the North Dakota Studies online curriculum at
ndstudies.gov.